

FOOD STAMP NUTRITION EDUCATION

Food Stamp Nutrition Education (FSNE) plays an essential role in improving dietary and physical activity practices, helping to enhance food security, prevent obesity, and reduce the risks of chronic disease among low-income Americans.

What is FSNE? Authorized as a Food Stamp Program (FSP) administrative cost, FSNE is a federal/state partnership that provides matching funds to support nutrition education for low-income persons currently and potentially eligible for Food Stamps. State agencies that choose to conduct FSNE as part of their Food Stamp operations are eligible to be reimbursed for one half of their costs by the USDA Food and Nutrition Service. The goal of FSNE is to improve the likelihood that food stamp participants and applicants will make healthy choices within a limited budget and choose active lifestyles consistent with the current *Dietary Guidelines for Americans* and MyPyramid.gov.

FSNE in California. In California, FSNE is overseen by the California Department of Social Services (CDSS) and delivered through interagency agreements with the California Department of Public Health (CDPH) and the University of California. CDPH has established the *Network for a Healthy California (Network)* to provide a fiscal and programmatic infrastructure for FSNE. It supports a comprehensive statewide nutrition and physical activity campaign that works through diverse channels and hundreds of local programs in defined low-income settings to target an estimated seven million FSNE-eligible parents and children.



Today FSNE is the state's largest public source of funding available to low-income communities for local nutrition education and physical activity interventions. In 2007 the *Network* qualified California agencies for over \$100 million in Federal Financial Participation to support FSNE activities throughout the state.

Strengthening Nutrition Education By empowering parents and their children to make healthy choices, FSNE programs can bring about positive lifestyle changes, especially increased fruit and vegetable consumption. But with the obesity epidemic and other serious health problems disproportionately impacting low-income Californians, we need to do more to unlock the potential of FSNE to reach more FSNE-eligible Californians in venues where they live, work, go to school, worship, and make their food and physical activity choices. Expert bodies such as the Institute of Medicine indicate that dietary and physical activity behavior change is more likely to result from the combined application of public health approaches and education rather than education alone.

The Farm Bill provides an opportunity to strengthen FSNE so it can help reduce food insecurity and hunger, improve nutrition and physical activity, and thus help avoid costly health disparities such as obesity and type 2 diabetes. State and local programs must be able to utilize additional approaches that enable and support healthy behavior change at the individual level by addressing social, environmental and community factors.

California Supports:

- Enhancing the effectiveness of Food Stamp Nutrition Education (FSNE) by allowing state Food Stamp Programs the option to use education, marketing and population-based public health approaches to increase community food security and promote healthy eating, physical activity and obesity prevention for low-income Americans.
- Coordinating FSNE activities to enhance the effectiveness of other federally funded nutrition and public health programs and build public/private partnerships that maximize resources, increase impact and create sustainable change.